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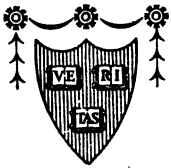

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SUSAN GREENE DEXTER

AN

Authentic, Candid, and Circumstantial

NARRATIVE

OF THE

Astonishing Transactions

AT STOCKWELL,

&c. &c.

[*Price Six-Pence.*]

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Authentic, Candid, and Circumstantial

NARRATIVE

OF THE

Astonishing Transactions

AT STOCKWELL,

In the County of Surry,

On MONDAY and TUESDAY, the 6th and 7th Days of JANUARY, 1772,

CONTAINING

A Series

OF THE

Most Surprising & Unaccountable Events

THAT EVER HAPPENED,

Which continued, from first to last, upwards of Twenty Hours, and in different Places.

Published with the Consent and Approbation of the Family, and other Parties concerned, to authenticate which, the original Copy is signed by them.

LONDON:

Printed by T. Burkett, Jerusalem-Court, St. John-Street.

FOR MR. PARTRIDGE,

And Sold by him, at his Academy, Stockwell.

1809.

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A

NARRATIVE,

&c. &c.

BEFORE we enter upon a description of the most extraordinary transactions that perhaps ever happened, we shall begin with an account of the parties who were principally concerned, and in justice to them, give their characters; by which means the impartial world may be enabled to form some judgment what credit is due to the following narrative.

The events indeed are of so strange and singular a nature, that we cannot be at all surprised the public should be doubtful of the truth of them, more especially as there have been too many impositions of this sort; but let us consider, here are no sinister ends to be answered,

no contributions wished for, nor would be accepted, as the parties are in reputable situations, and good circumstances, particularly Mrs. Golding, who is a lady of an independent fortune. Richard Fowler and his wife might be looked upon as an exception to this assertion, but as their loss was trivial, they must be left out of the question, except so far as they appear corroborating evidences.

Mrs. Pain's maid lost nothing.

How or by what means these transactions were brought about, time only will discover, if that ever happen. We have only now to rest our confidence on the veracity of the parties, whose descriptions have been most strictly attended to, without the least deviation; nothing here offered is either exaggerated or diminished, the whole stated in the clearest manner, just as they occurred, and as such only we lay them before the candid and impartial public.

MRS. GOLDING, an elderly lady at Stockwell, in Surry, at whose house the transaction began, was born in the same

parish, (of Lambeth) has lived in it ever since, and has always been well known and respected, as a gentlewoman of unblemished honor and character.

Mrs. Pain, a niece of Mrs. Golding, has been married several years to Mr. Pain, a farmer, at Brixton-Causeway, a little above Mr. Angel's, has several children, are well known and respected in the parish.

Mary Martin, Mr. Pain's servant, an elderly woman, has lived two years with them, and four years with Mrs. Golding, where she came from.

Richard Fowler lives almost opposite to Mr. Pain, at the Brick Pound, an honest, industrious, and sober man.

Sarah Fowler, wife to the above, an industrious and sober woman.

The above are the subscribing evidences that we must rest the truth of the facts upon; yet there are numbers of other persons, who were eye-witnesses of many of the transactions during the time they happened, all of whom must acknowledge the truth of them.

Another person, who bore a principal part in these scenes, was Ann Robinson, Mrs. Golding's maid, a young woman, about twenty years old, who had lived with her but one week and three days.

I shall not take up any more of the reader's attention from the narrative, but begin as follows:

On Monday, [illegible]uary the 6th, 1772, about ten o'clock in the forenoon, as Mrs. Golding was in her parlour, she heard the china and glasses in the back kitchen tumble down and break. Her maid came to her, and told her the stone plates were falling from the shelf;—Mrs. Golding went into the kitchen, and saw them broken. Presently after, a row of plates from the next shelf fell down likewise, while she was there, and nobody near them. This astonished her much, and while she was thinking upon it, other things in different places began to tumble about, some of them breaking, attended with violent noises all over the house. A clock tumbled down, and the case broke; a lanthorn that hung on the stair-case was thrown down, and the

glass broke to pieces; an earthen pan of salted beef broke to pieces, and the beef fell about.

All this increased her surprise, and brought several persons about her, among whom was Mr. Rowlidge, a carpenter, who gave it as his opinion that the foundation was giving way, and that the house was tumbling down, occasioned by the too great weight of an additional room erected above. — So ready are we to discover natural causes for every thing!

But no such thing happened, as the reader will find; for, whatever was the cause, that cause ceased almost as soon as Mrs. Golding and her maid left any place, and followed them wherever they went. Mrs. Golding ran into Mr. Gresham's house, a gentleman living next door to her, where she fainted.

In the interim, Mr. Rowlidge, and other persons were removing Mrs. Golding's effects from her house, for fear of the consequences he had prognosticated. At this time all was quite; Mrs. Golding's maid remaining in her house, was gone up stairs, and when called upon several times to come down, for fear of

the dangerous situation she was thought to be in; she answered very cooly, and after some time came down as deliberately, without any seeming fearful apprehensions.

Mrs. Pain was sent for from Brixton-Causeway, and desired to come immediately, as her aunt was supposed to be dead. This was the message to her.—When Mrs. Pain came, Mrs. Golding was come to herself, but very faint.

Among the persons who were present, was Mr. Gardner, a surgeon, of Clapham, whom Mrs. Pain desired to bleed her aunt, which he did. Mrs. Pain asked him if the blood should be thrown away; he desired it might not, as he would examine it when cold.

These minute particulars would not be taken notice of, but as a chain to what follows: for the next circumstance is of a more astonishing nature than any thing that had preceded;—the blood that was just congealed, sprung out of the bason upon the floor, and presently after the bason was broke to pieces. This china bason was the only thing broke belong-

ing to Mr. Gresham ; a bottle of rum that stood by it broke at the same time.

Amongst the things that were removed to Mr. Gresham's, was a tray full of china, &c. ; a japan bread-basket, some mahogany waiters, with some bottles of liquors, jars of pickles, &c. and a pier glass, which was taken down by Mr. Saville, (a neighbour of Mrs. Golding's) he gave it to one Robert Hames, who laid it on the grass-plat at Mr. Gresham's, but before he could put it out of his hands, some parts of the frame on each side flew off. It raining at that time, Mrs. Golding desired it might be brought into the parlour, where it was placed under a sideboard, and a dressing-glass along with it ; it had not been there long before the glasses and china that stood on the sideboard, began to tumble about, and fall down, and broke both the glasses to pieces. Mr. Saville, and others, being asked to drink a glass of wine or rum, both the bottles broke in pieces before they were uncorked.

Mrs. Golding's surprise and fear increasing, she did not know what to do,

or where to go. Wherever she and her maid were, these strange destructive circumstances followed her; and how to help or free herself from them, was not in her power, or any person's present; her mind was one confused chaos; lost to herself, and every thing about her, drove from her own home, and afraid there would be none other to receive her; at last she left Mr. Gresham's, and went to Mr. Mayling's, a gentleman at the next door; here she staid about three quarters of an hour, during which time nothing happened.

Her maid remained at Mr. Gresham's, to help put up what few things were yet unbroke of her mistress's in a back apartment, when a jar of pickles that stood upon a table turned upside down, then a jar of rasberry jam broke to pieces; next two mahogany waiters and a quadrille box broke to pieces.

Mrs. Pain, not choosing her aunt should remain too long at Mr. Mayling's, for fear of being troublesome, persuaded her to go to her house at Rush Common, near Brixton Causeway, where she would endeavor to make her as happy as she

could, hoping by this time all was over, as nothing had happened at that gentleman's house while she was there.—This was about two o'clock in the afternoon.

Mr. and Miss Gresham were at Mr. Pain's house, when Mrs. Pain, Mrs. Golding, and her maid went there. It being about dinner time they all dined together; in the interim, Mrs. Golding's servant was sent to her house to see how things remained. When she returned, she told them nothing had happened since they left it. Some time after, Mr. and Miss Gresham went home, every thing remaining quiet at Mr. Pain's: but about eight o'clock in the evening, a fresh scene began, the first thing that happened was, a whole row of pewter dishes, except one, fell from a shelf to the middle of the floor, rolled about a little while, then settled, and what is almost beyond belief, as soon as they were still, turned upside down; they were then put on the dresser, and went through the same a second time; next fell a whole row of pewter plates from the second shelf over the dresser to the ground, and being taken

up and put on the dresser one in another, they were thrown down again.

The next thing was, two eggs that were upon one of the pewter shelves, one of them flew off, crossed the kitchen, struck a cat on the head, and then broke to pieces.

Next, Mary Martin, Mrs. Pain's servant went to stir the kitchen fire, she got to the right hand side of it, being a large chimney, as is usual in farm-houses, a pestle and mortar that stood nearer the left hand end of the chimney shelf, jumped about six feet on the floor. Then went candlesticks and other brasses:—scarce any thing remaining in its place.

After this the glasses and china were put down on the floor for fear of undergoing the same fate, they presently began to dance and tumble about, and then broke to pieces. A tea-pot that was among them, flew to Mrs. Golding's maid's foot and struck it.

A glass tumbler that was put on the floor jumped about two feet and then broke. Another that stood by it jumped

about at the same time, but did not break till some hours after, when it jumped again and then broke. A china bowl that stood in the parlour jumped from the floor to behind a table that stood there. This was most astonishing, as the distance from where it stood was between seven and eight feet, but was not broke. It was put back by Richard Fowler, to its place, where it remained some time, and then flew to pieces.

The next thing that followed was a mustard pot that jumped out of a closet and was broke. A single cup that stood upon the table, (almost the only thing remaining) jumped up, flew across the kitchen, ringing like a bell, and then was dashed to pieces against the dresser. A candlestick that stood on the chimney shelf flew across the kitchen to the parlour door, at about fifteen feet distance. A tea kettle under the dresser, was thrown out about two feet, another kettle that stood at one end of the range, was thrown against the iron that is fixed to prevent children falling into the fire. A tumbler with rum and water in it, that stood upon a waiter upon a table in

the parlour, jumped about ten feet and was broke. The table then fell down, and along with it a silver tankard belonging to Mrs. Golding, the waiter in which had stood the tumbler and a candlestick. A case bottle then flew to pieces

The next circumstance was, a ham that hung in one side of the kitchen chimney raised itself from the hook and fell down to the ground. Some time after, another ham that hung on the other side of the chimney, likewise underwent the same fate. Then a flitch of bacon, which hung up in the same chimney fell down.

All the family were eye-witnesses to these circumstances as well as other persons, some of whom were so alarmed and shocked, that they could not bear to stay, and was happy in getting away, though the unhappy family were left in the midst of their distresses. Most of the genteel families around were continually sending to enquire after them, and whether all was over or not. Is it not surprising that some among them had not the inclination and resolution to try to unravel this most intricate affair, at a

time when it would have been in their power to have done so ?—There certainly was sufficient time for so doing, as the whole from first to last continued upwards of twenty hours.

At all the times of action, Mrs. Golding's servant was walking backwards and forwards, either in the kitchen or parlour, or wherever some of the family happened to be. Nor could they get her to sit down five minutes together, except at one time for about half an hour towards the morning, when the family were at prayers in the parlour; then all was quiet; but in the midst of the greatest confusion, she was as much composed as at any other time, and with uncommon coolness of temper advised her mistress not to be alarmed or uneasy, as she said these things could not be helped. Thus she argued as if they were common occurences which must happen in every family.

This advice surprised and startled her mistress, almost as much as the circumstances which occasioned it. For how can we suppose that a girl of about twenty years old, (an age when female timidity is too often assisted by super-

stition) could remain in the midst of such calamitous circumstances (except they proceeded from causes best known to herself) and not be struck with the same terror as every other person present.—These reflections led Mr. Pain, and at the end of the transactions likewise Mrs. Golding to suspect that she was not altogether so unconcerned as she appeared to be. But hitherto, the whole remains mysterious and unravelled.

About ten o'clock at night, they sent over the way to Richard Fowler, to desire he would come and stay with them. He came and continued till one in the morning, and was so terrified that he could remain no longer.

As Mrs. Golding could not be persuaded to go to bed, Mrs. Pain at that time (one o'clock) made an excuse to go up stairs to her youngest child, under pretence of getting it to sleep, but she really acknowledges it was through fear, as she declares she could not sit up to see such strange things going on, as every thing, one after another, was broke, till there was not above two or three cups and saucers remaining out of a consider-

able quantity of china, &c, &c. which was destroyed to the amount of some pounds.

About five o'clock on Tuesday morning, Mrs. Golding went up to her niece, and desired her to get up, as the noises and destruction were so great she could continue in the house no longer. At this time all the tables, chairs, drawers, &c. were tumbling about. When Mrs. Pain came down, it was amazing beyond all description! Their only security then was to quit the house, for fear of the same catastrophe, as had been expected the morning before at Mrs. Golding's in consequence of this resolution, Mrs. Golding and her maid went over the way to Richard Fowler's. When Mrs. Golding's maid had seen her safe to Richard Fowler's, she came back to Mrs. Pain, to help her dress the children in the barn, where she had carried them for fear of the house falling.

At this time all was quiet, they then went to Fowler's, and then began the same scene as had happened at the other places. It must be remarked, all was quiet here, as well as elsewhere, till the maid returned.

When they got to Mr. Fowler's he began to light a fire in his back room. When done he put the candle and candlestick upon a table in the fore-room. This apartment Mrs. Golding and her maid had passed through. Another candlestick with a tin lamp in it that stood by it, were both dashed together and fell to the ground. A lanthorn with which Mrs. Golding was lighted across the road, sprung from a hook to the ground, and a quantity of oil was spilled on the floor.

The last thing was the basket of coals tumbled over, and the coals rolled about the room; the maid then desired Richard Fowler not to let her mistress remain there, as she said, wherever she was, the same things would follow. In consequence of this advice, and fearing greater losses to himself, he desired she would quit his house; but first begged her to consider within herself, for her own and the public's sake, whether or not she had not been guilty of some atrocious crime, for which Providence was determined to pursue her on this side the grave, for he could not help thinking, she was the object that was to be made an example to

posterity, by the all seeing eye of Providence, for crimes which but too often none but that Providence can penetrate, and by such means as these bring to light.

Thus was this poor gentlewoman's measure of affliction complete, not only to have undergone all which has been related, but to have added to it the character of a bad and wicked woman, when till this time, she was esteemed as a most deserving person. In candour to Fowler, he could not be blamed; what could he do? what would any man have done that was so circumstanced? Mrs. Golding soon satisfied him; she told him she would not stay in his house or any other person's, as her conscience was quite clear, and she could as well wait the will of Providence in her own house as in any other place whatever; upon which she and her maid went home; Mr. Pain went with them. After they had got to Mrs. Golding's the last time, the same transactions once more began upon the remains that were left.

A nine gallon cask of beer that was in the cellar, the door being open, and no person near, turned upside down.

A pail of water that stood on the floor, boiled like a pot.

A box of candles fell from a shelf in the kitchen to the floor, they rolled out, but none were broke.

A round mahogany table overset in the parlour.

Mr. Pain then desired Mrs. Golding to send her maid for his wife to come to them; when she was gone, all was quiet. Upon her return she was immediately discharged and no disturbances have happened since: this was between six and seven o'clock on Tuesday morning.

At Mrs. Golding's was broke the quantity of three pails full of glass, china, &c.

At Mrs. Pain's they filled two pails.

Thus ends the narrative; a true, circumstantial, and faithful account of which I have laid before the public; for so doing, I hope to escape its censure; I have neither exaggerated or diminished one circumstance to my knowledge; and have endeavoured as much as possible, throughout the whole, to state only the facts, without persuming to obtrude my

opinion on them. If I have in part hinted any thing that may appear unfavourable to the girl, it proceeded not from a determination to charge her with the cause, right or wrong, but only from a strict adherence to truth, most sincerely wishing this extraordinary affair may be unravelled.

The above narrative, is absolutely and strictly true, in witness whereof we have set our hands this eleventh day of January, 1772.

MARY GOLDING.
JOHN PAIN.
MARY PAIN.
RICHARD FOWLER.
SARAH FOWLER.
MARY MARTIN.

FINIS.

T. Burkett, Printer, Jerusalem-Court, Clerkenwell.